



## **MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

### **LEGISLATIVE COMMENT**

**DATE: 02/07/2018 BILL NO.: HB- 252**

**SUBJECT:** Department of Agriculture- Agritourism

**COMMITTEE:** ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

**MDA POSITION:** SUPPORT

#### **EXPLANATION:**

HB 252 would establish a model definition in the Agriculture article for county governments to adopt through their legislative process as a local ordinance, resolution, law or rule.

#### **COMMENT:**

Four years ago, the Governor's Inter-Governmental Commission on Agriculture (GICA), established an Agritourism working group to develop a list of major issues and make recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture on the state's business environment for Agritourism operations. Comprised of representatives from the agriculture community, county planning offices and government agencies, the workgroup drafted the model definition which HB 252 seeks to establish. The definition is not a mandate on county governments to adopt. It is the intent of GICA to move the definition forward as a way to provide a reference in state law and allow the counties to conduct their own process to establish in their local rules and regulations.

The work conducted by GICA has already been beneficial and influential; just this past year, Anne Arundel county used the GICA definition to develop a county based Agritourism committee to develop legislation to establish an Agritourism definition. This was also a way for the county to address Agritourism activities as an allowable use in certain zoning districts and define building code requirements for existing farm buildings used in Agritourism activities.

MDA and GICA request a favorable report for HB 252 to ensure our family farms have the clarity and certainty if or when they choose to diversify their farming operations.

**MDA requests a favorable report on HB 252**